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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, March 10, 2008, at 12:30 p.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2008

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who unites us with Your love, help the Members of this body to fulfill their duties to You and to each other. Give them the spirit to feel the sorrows and trials of others as they become Your instruments in bringing deliverance to those on life's margins.

Preserve them from selfishness and empower them to walk in Your love. May they receive strength from Your promises, wisdom from Your precepts, and courage from Your Providence. Be their abiding reality as you lead them into paths of loving service. We pray in the Name of Him who is the truth and life. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SHERROD BROWN, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 7, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BROWN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

FISA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, nearly an entire year has passed since the nonpartisan Director of National Intelligence, ADM Mike McConnell, warned Congress that America's electronic surveillance law was dangerously out of date and in critical need of repair. The old law was causing us to miss substantial amounts of intelligence on terrorist suspects overseas, and it needed to be fixed.

Yet nearly a year later the problem has still not been resolved. For no good reason, the dangers posed by the old law remain. The Senate has done its part to correct the problem. Last month, we passed a broadly bipartisan bill that fixed the outdated FISA law

as well as the temporary bill that replaced it in August.

The only thing now standing in the way of intelligence officials having all the tools they need to monitor terrorists is the House Democratic leadership which is blocking the will of its own majority by refusing to vote on the Senate-passed version of the bill.

The House leadership's actions are quite irresponsible. Worse, they are dangerous. When a temporary 6-month revision of the FISA bill expired last month, House leaders said they needed 15 days to deliberate over a new revision that included legal protections for phone companies that stepped forward after 9/11 to help in the hunt for terrorists.

When those 15 days were up, House Democrats said they needed 3 more weeks. Then they left town for a vacation without acting, despite the urgent pleas of the Director of National Intelligence not to leave the bill undone.

Now, 3 weeks after House Democratic leaders said they needed 3 weeks to work out their concerns, they are ready to go on vacation without acting again, this time on a 2-week spring break. The patience of the American people is wearing thin. It is long past time for the Democratic leadership in the House to do its part.

They face a simple choice: Either take up the Senate-passed bipartisan bill that is guaranteed to pass their Chamber and be signed into law or go on another vacation, leaving the intelligence agents without the tools they need and America more vulnerable to terrorist attack.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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